

Town of Leeds Point
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
Intersection of County Roads 619 and 561 Alternate
Leeds Point
Atlantic County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1037

HABS
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1-LEADS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF LEEDS POINT

HABS No. NJ-1037

Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, Intersection of County Roads 619 and 561
Alternate, Leeds Point, Atlantic County, New Jersey.

Significance: The town of Leeds Point, located south of the Great Bay of the Little Egg Inlet, developed from a 1684 land grant from the crown to Daniel Leeds, a native of Leeds, England. The town is representative of the fishing villages which lined the bay.

History: In 1681, Leeds was appointed to the prestigious position of the first Surveyor General of West Jersey, later becoming a member of the Assembly as well as a member of Lord Cornbury's Council in 1704¹ However, he is perhaps best known for his yearly almanacs, which he wrote between 1687 to 1716, continued by his two sons.² In 1698, Leeds surveyed the property awarded to him, and presumably settled there soon after. Leeds' homeplace, a two-story masonry dwelling, still stands at the junction of Moss Mill and Hammock Roads. The datestone reads 1814, though it has been suggested that this refers to a later remodeling of an earlier structure.³

Leeds Point has always been a small hamlet, and has never been legally incorporated. Gordon's Gazetteer mentioned Leeds Point as a post village with "considerable trade" and a population of 208. It was further described as "the principal one of a series of fishing villages and hamlets along the bays and inlets from the south shore of the Great Bay to Absecom [sic]." In 1850, one blacksmith, five merchants, and one hotel keeper were conducting business in Leeds Point. By the turn of the century, Leeds Point had grown to 250 residents and had "many firms engaged in oyster shipping" and a population of 250.⁴

Located within the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, only the area along Route 9 to the bay has developed. The new houses in this area, including Leeds Point, Barrywood and Saddle Ridge Estates, seem far removed from the collection of fishing piers and shanties near the water. An old stone house marks the turn down Oyster Creek Road through the refuge, to the rustic fishing "village" of Gordon's description. During the summer season, the Oyster Creek Inn provides picturesque dining and charter boats.

¹ Eugene V. Young, The Story of Galloway Township (Egg Harbor City, NJ: Galloway Township Bicentennial Committee, ca. 1976), 15-16; Henry Charlton Beck, More Forgotten Towns of Southern New Jersey (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 116-17; William McMahon, Historic South Jersey Towns (Atlantic City: Press Publishing Co., 1964), 29.

² William McMahon, South Jersey Towns: History and Legend (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973), 29; Young, 15.

³ Beck, 116; Young, 15; McMahon, South Jersey Towns, 29.

⁴ "Atlantic County Business Directory, 1850," Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 9 (October 1980), 17-19; Beers, "Topographical Map of Atlantic County"; U.S. Post Office, "Post Route Map of the State of New Jersey," (ca. 1882); "A 1901 Industrial Directory," Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook (October 1988), 26.

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- Sources: "Atlantic County Business Directory, 1850," Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 9, October 1980.
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- McMahon, William. Historic South Jersey Towns. Atlantic City: Press Publishing Co., 1964.
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Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.